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The Columbia Race Riots

By William Frederic Worner

Homer, 3000 years ago, said: "Most sons are inferior to their fathers, a few are equal, and fewer still are superior to them."

The history of Columbia occupies a unique place in the annals of Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. From an early period, one phase of its local life had to do with the movements of colored people, who, at that time, comprised manumitted slaves and a goodly number of fugitives. This was, in a measure, due to the fact that the pioneer settlers of Columbia were friends of the slave. William Wright, grandson of John Wright, one of the first settlers of Columbia, was not only the black man's friend but an aggressive opponent of slavery, and he waged war on that system whenever he had an opportunity.

Columbia has had a large negro population for more than one hundred years. The number at the present time is estimated to be nearly four hundred. The Federal census of 1920 indicated the Negro population to be 336. This influx of colored people was due to several causes, not the least being the fact that Columbia was once an important station on the "Underground Railroad."

In 1816, Captain Izard Bacon, a wealthy slaveholder of Henrico county, Virginia, liberated fifty-six slaves. Some of his heirs tried to hold them in slavery; but, after long litigation, they obtained freedom. Charles Granger, a nephew of Bacon, collected these free Negroes, loaded them and their goods into old rickety wagons and started for the Northern states, with a view to taking them to Canada. The caravan reached Columbia on its journey, and for several days the men, women and children were quartered in a stone warehouse belonging to Samuel Bethel, which stood where the canal basin was. The Wrights then gave them land in the northeastern section of the borough, where they erected small cabins. That was in 1819. Two years later, one hundred manumitted slaves from Hanover county, Virginia, (originally the property of Sally Bell, a Friend, who emancipated them), came to Columbia and were quartered at what was known as the Lamb tavern, on Locust street, until places could be found for them in that part of the town called, rather appropriately, on account of the many Negroes there, "Tow Hill." Tow Hill became known as a "jumping-off" station on the line of the "Underground Railroad," where many an escaped slave found a secure hiding place. The collection of log and frame shanties which dotted the "hill," sheltered hundreds of darkies, who, in earlier days, had worked in tobacco, cotton and corn fields down in Dixie.

They found ready employment along the river among the lumber merchants; in summer time making a fair living by drawing lumber

(that is, separating and washing boards,) of which the rafts that floated down the Susquehanna during the freshets, were composed, and placing them in tall piles along the river front.

Columbia was then the most important place along the Susquehanna at which a bridge spanned the stream; and, on that account, fugitives, by the hundreds, sought refuge among the people of their own race. Some remained among the colored residents, but others, being pursued by their masters, were caught and taken back into slavery. It was probably this condition that led William Wright to conceive the plan of passing the runaways from one post to another to secure their liberty. This system became known as the "Underground Railroad," and was a term given in the United States, before the abolition of slavery, to a secret arrangement for helping slaves to escape, by helping them from one hiding place to another, located at intervals of ten and twenty miles, until they reached Canada, or other territory where they were safe from recapture.

Columbia in 1830 had a population of 2046, and 429 of that number were "colored folk"; many of whom were runaway slaves who had escaped over the border via the Underground Railway. They had stopped at this station, with the river between them and their masters, and accepted the chances of recapture. In fact, Columbia was the great depot at which fugitives landed. It was geographically convenient; a majority of the first settlers were "Friends" or Quakers; and successive emancipation of slaves who came there from the South gave it a large and industrious colored community. By 1840 the Negroes numbered 455, or about one-sixth of the total population of the borough.

The Negro inhabitants of Columbia were a good-natured but improvident people. There were, however, exceptions to the rule. Many of these people were frugal and energetic and possessed of excellent business qualifications. Some became quite wealthy.

The borough of Columbia has furnished an incident in the history of its colored population that is probably without parallel in the annals of the State. The event was an unusual one, and precipitated what might be termed a near-riot. It occasioned great distress among the colored population who then lived in Columbia and who were innocent victims of the disorder. The disturbance came about in a peculiar manner and may be attributed, in large measure, to the success and good fortune that seemed to follow in the career of one of their number, Stephen Smith, who was born in Paxtang, Dauphin county, Pa. On July 10, 1801, when but five years of age, he was indentured to General Boude, a Revolutionary patriot, who resided near Columbia, Pa. As a servant, Smith was faithful to his master and merited the good treatment which he received at his hands. The condition of the indenture was that Smith was to remain in servitude until he reached the age of twenty-one years.

He was placed in the General's lumber yard to work, and there developed so much executive ability that General Boude turned over to him before he reached maturity the entire management of his extensive lumber business along the river front.

When Smith had attained the age of twenty-one, he married a pretty mulatto girl named Harriet Lee, who was a domestic in the family of Jonathan Mifflin. The ceremony was performed on November 17, 1816, by Thomas Floyd, a Justice of the Peace. About this time, the colored youth proposed to General Boude to purchase his freedom. The generous master agreed to accept fifty dollars for his release. Good John Barber,

to whom Smith had presented his case, lent him the money, and on January 3, 1816 the purchase was consummated.

Immediately after obtaining his freedom, Smith, who, by doing extra work had saved about fifty dollars, began to buy a little lumber and to speculate or trade in anything in which he could turn a penny to profit. His efforts were successful and his business prospered. His wife, meanwhile, kept an oyster and refreshment house. In the course of time, Stephen Smith owned and conducted one of the largest lumber yards along the river shore, many of the older citizens of Lancaster county having bought of "Black Steve" the lumber to build their houses and barns. He also invested in real estate, displaying much wisdom in his purchases. He was always present at sales, looking for bargains. Whenever property changed hands at a public sale Stephen Smith was sure to be a bidder, and his actions excited the envy and ill will of white people, who claimed that his course was highly objectionable and must cease. He reached the height of his prosperity in Columbia in 1834.

While fortune seemed to smile on him he was not unmindful of the degraded state in which the people of his race lived and labored, and of his duty to help them. In 1832 he purchased, at his own expense, a frame church building for use of the Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal congregation.

He was the largest stockholder of his day in the Columbia bank; and, according to its rules, would have been president had it not been for his complexion. Being thus barred, he was given the privilege of naming the white man who became president in his stead.

In the spring and summer of 1834, riots occurred in many Northern cities against the Negroes, and the excitement spread to Columbia. The number of Negroes in the borough had increased considerably. To some of the white residents their presence was desirable because they were employed to do all the labor for the lumber merchants along the river. This was especially true during the busy seasons of the year. In course of time, their presence excited the envy of some of the whites, who became dissatisfied with conditions and finally caused riots which stirred up the whole community.

On Saturday, Sunday and Monday evenings, August 16, 17 and 18, 1834, the first outbreaks of a riotous disposition were exhibited in the borough, and the windows of the houses of several of the colored people were broken, — partly on account of their own imprudence and partly through the spirit of jealousy and animosity which pervaded the country respecting them.

On Tuesday night, August 19, 1834, the disorder broke out more violently, the passions of the persons who took part in the mob (consisting generally of minors, with some older but not more reflecting heads among them) having been fired by a disturbance in the early part of the evening. The cause was represented by some as an attack by the blacks on a white man going to watch a lot on the outskirts of the town; and, by others, as a necessary defense of their property when assailed by violence.

A band of persons, consisting in all of not more than fifty, collected, and marched to that part of the borough generally occupied by the colored population. They attacked and defaced a number of houses with stones, disturbed the quiet of the place by shouting, and occasionally firing off guns, though without serious result. After keeping the citizens in consternation and preventing them from retiring to rest before one o'clock in the morning, the mob at length dispersed.

Most of the frightened Negroes, however, fled to the hills above the town, and a few to Bethel's woods. Here they were obliged to remain in hiding for several days, without food or shelter, until the fury of the mob had ceased. Becoming alarmed at the seriousness of the situation, residents of the neighborhood notified "Dare Devil" Dave Miller, then high sheriff of the county. He swore in a large number of "Deputies," who went from Lancaster to Columbia in pursuit of the rioters. Some of the offenders were apprehended, particularly such as were supposed to be the leaders, and were brought to trial. But sentiment in those days was not favorable to the colored people and none was convicted.

On Wednesday evening, August 20, 1834, a meeting of the inhabitants of the borough of Columbia was held in the town hall, at which time it was

"Resolved, That a paper 'setting forth the consequences of the present excitement in the town and containing a pledge to assist in the suppression of disorder, which was signed by a large number of citizens, be read'; which having been done, it was

"Resolved, That our civil magistrates do forthwith legally appoint a strong and efficient police for the protection of the persons and property of the peaceable inhabitants of this borough.

"Resolved, That this special police shall consist of fifty.

"Resolved, That whereas an undue excitement has lately originated in this borough, endangering the lives and property of the citizens generally; and whereas, it is an imperative duty of every good citizen to use his influence together with every means in his power to prevent and suppress the like occurrence again; it is therefore

"Resolved, That in case of any attempt to disturb or molest the peace and quiet of any of the inhabitants of the borough in future it shall be the duty of every respectable citizen to give his assistance to the police and unite in going forward to the rioters or other disturbers of the peace, requesting them immediately to desist and disperse; and in case of refusal, to take the name of every person concerned, and prosecute them to the extent of the law.

"Resolved, That each citizen does pledge himself to volunteer his services as above, in case of disorder, or to go immediately at the request of any respectable person.

"Resolved, That these proceedings be published; whereupon the meeting adjourned.

"R. E. Cochran, Chairman.

"A. Green, Jr., Secretary."

The men appointed to patrol the borough performed their duty as directed.

Excitement ran high everywhere. Some idea of the state of affairs in Columbia at this time may be had when we read the following, which the chief burgess of the borough caused to be issued two days after the town meeting:

"Proclamation.

"Whereas there is at present an undue excitement in this town, and whereas there have been unlawful assemblages doing much damage and destroying the peace of the borough, and whereas numerous assemblages of people of color are particularly to be avoided, I do hereby command and enjoin it upon all colored persons from and after the issuing of this Proclamation and until publicity revoked, to cease from the holding of all public religious meeting whatsoever, of any kind, after the hour of 8 o'clock in the evening, within the borough limits. And I do further

request of and enjoin it upon all good citizens to aid in the suppression of all disturbances whatsoever, and particularly to aid in the execution of this Proclamation and in all proper ways to prevent the good order of the town from being destroyed, the laws broken and the lives and property of the citizens endangered, so that all persons concerned, or aiding or abetting in such disturbances may be arrested and dealt with according to the utmost extent of the law.

"Given under my hand and seal of office as Chief Burgess of the borough of Columbia, August 22, 1834.

"Robert Spear."

On Saturday evening, August 23, 1834, the day following the issuance of the Chief Burgess' proclamation, a meeting of the working men, and others favorable to their cause in the borough, was held in the town hall. Dr. Thomas L. Smith was appointed chairman and Joseph M. Watts, secretary. The following preamble and resolutions were passed at this meeting, without a dissenting voice:

"When a body of citizens assemble to concert measure for the protection of those inestimable rights secured to them by the constitution, they owe to the public a distinct statement of the grievances they meet to redress, so that disinterested and patriotic persons may not labor under any mistake or imbibe prejudices against them. We therefore, willingly detail to the people the causes that urged us to meet this evening, confident that the intelligent will approve and coincide with us in support of our measures. We cannot view the conduct of certain individuals in this borough, who by instilling pernicious ideas into the heads of the blacks, encourage and excite them to pursue a course of conduct that has caused and will continue to cause great disturbance and breaches of the peace, and which we are fearful if not checked will ultimately lead to bloodshed, without feeling abhorrence, disgust and indignation. The practice of others in employing Negroes to do that labor which was formerly done entirely by whites, we consider deserving our severest animadversions; and when it is represented to them that the whites are suffering by this conduct, the answer is, 'The world is wide, let them go elsewhere.' And is it come to this? Must the poor honest citizens that so long have maintained their families by their labor, fly from their native place that a band of disorderly Negroes may revel with the money that ought to support the white man and his family, commit the most lascivious and degrading actions with impunity, and wanton in riot and debauchery. Who in this town does not know in what manner many Negroes spend their leisure hours; and who, but one that has lost all sense of right and justice, would encourage and protect them? As the negroes now pursue occupations once the sole province of the whites, may we not in course of time expect to see them engaged in every branch of mechanical business, and their known disposition to work for almost any price may well excite our fears, that mechanics at no distant period will scarcely be able to procure a mere subsistence. The cause of the late disgraceful riots throughout every part of the country may be traced to the efforts of those who would wish the poor whites to amalgamate with the blacks, for in all their efforts to accomplish this diabolical design, we see no intention in them to marry their own daughters to the blacks, it is therefore intended to break down the distinctive barrier between the colors that the poor whites may gradually sink into the degraded condition of the Negroes — that, like them, they may be slaves and tools, and that the blacks are to witness their disgusting

servility to their employers and their unbearable insolence to the working class. Feeling that this state of things must have a brief existence if we wish to preserve our liberties, therefore be it

“Resolved, That we will not purchase any article (that can be procured elsewhere) or give our vote for any office whatever, to any one who employs Negroes to do that species of labor white men have been accustomed to perform.

“Resolved, That we deeply deplore the late riots and will as peaceable men assist to protect the persons and property of the citizens in case of disturbance.

“Resolved, That the Colonization Society ought to be supported by all the citizens favorable to the removal of the blacks from the country.

“Resolved, That the preachers of immediate abolition and amalgamation ought to be considered as political incendiaries, and regarded with indignation and abhorrence.

“Resolved, That the editor of the Spy be requested to publish the proceedings of this meeting.”

Another meeting of the citizens of the borough of Columbia assembled at the town hall on Tuesday evening, August 26, 1834, in pursuance of a printed call “to take into consideration the situation of the colored population, and to devise some means to prevent the further influx of colored persons to this place.” James Given, Esq., was called to the chair, and Thomas E. Cochran appointed secretary.

The following resolutions were offered by Chief Burgess Robert Spear and adopted at the meeting:

“Resolved, That a committee be appointed whose duty it shall be to ascertain the colored population of this borough, the occupation and employment of the adult males among them, and their visible means of subsistence.

“Resolved, That a committee be appointed whose duty it shall be to communicate with that portion of those colored persons who hold property in this borough and ascertain, if possible, if they would be willing to dispose of the same at a fair valuation; and it shall be the duty of the said committee to advise the colored persons in said borough to refuse receiving any colored persons from other places as residents among them; and the said committee shall report their proceedings to the chairman and secretary of this meeting, who are hereby empowered and requested to call another meeting at an early period and lay before said meeting the reports of said committees that such order may be taken thereon as may be most advisable.

“Resolved, That the citizens of this borough be requested, in case of the discovery of any fugitive slaves within our bounds, to cooperate and assist in returning them to their lawful owners.”

The last resolution was offered by Henry Brimmer.

The following committees were then appointed by the meeting:

On the first resolution, Messrs. James Collins, Peter Haldeman, Jacob F. Markley, John McMullen and William Atkins. On the second resolution, Robert Spear, Esq., Messrs. Henry Brimmer and James H. Mifflin.

At the adjourned meeting of the citizens convened at the town hall on Monday evening, September 1, 1834, to receive the reports of the committees appointed to inquire into the state of the colored population and to negotiate with them on the subject of a sale of their property, the officers of the former meeting resumed their seats.

The committees having made their reports, it was on motion

"Resolved, That these reports be remanded to the committees who offered them for the purpose of having resolutions attached to them, and that this meeting do adjourn until Wednesday evening next."

The meeting convened pursuant to adjournment on Wednesday evening, September 3, 1834. The committee appointed to inquire into the state of the colored population of the borough presented the following report and recommendation, which were adopted:

"Number of black population found in Columbia, Penna., on August 28, 1834;—214 men, 171 women, 264 children— total 649.

"It is supposed that a good number have left the place within a few days, and that a number were scattered through the town that were not seen by the committee. Among the above men, the committee consider the following named persons as vagrants: William Rockaway, Henry Holland, Wash Butler, Charles Butler, Jacob Coursey, Joe Dellam, James Larret, Joseph Hughes, Abraham Waters, William Malston, Jr., and Lloyd Murray.

"A house occupied by John Scott and William Stockes, is considered by the committee as a house of ill fame; it is rented by Joshua P. B. Eddy to them.

"James Collins

"William Atkins

"John McMullen

"J. F. Markley

"Peter Haldeman."

The committee also recommended the attention of the proper authorities as early as practicable to the above named vagrants and nuisances.

The committee appointed to negotiate with the blacks on the sale of their property, reported as follows:

"That they have endeavored to give that attention to the subject which its importance justly demands.

"They have, in the first place, ascertained as nearly as possible the names and number of colored freeholders in this borough, which according to the best information they could obtain they lay before you as follows, viz: Henry Barney, William Brown, Aaron Brown, James Burrell, Michael Dellam, Charles Dellam, Joshua Eddy, Walter Green, John Green, George Hayden, Widow Hayden, James Hollinsworth,—Henderson, Glasgow Mature, Edward Miller, William Pearl, Nicholas Pleasants, Philip Pleasants, Jacob Dickinson, John Johnson, Ephraim Malson, Sawney Alexander, Robert Patterson, Stephen Smith, Peter Swails, John Thomas, James Richards, Betsey Dean (formerly, Roatch), George Taylor, George Young, Stephen Wilts, Eliza Park, Thomas Waters, Samuel Wilson, Patrick Vincent, John Vincent and Washington Vincent—making in all thirty-seven.

"They have called on most of them in person and think the disposition manifested by most of them decidedly favorable to the object of the committee. Some of them are anxious, many willing, to sell at once provided a reasonable price were offered—others would dispose of their property as soon as they could find any other eligible situation.

"All to whom your committee spoke on the subject of harboring strange persons among them, seemed disposed to give the proper attention to the subject. Your committee deem the result of their observation decidedly satisfactory.

"In presenting this report your committee would respectfully call your attention to the impropriety of further urging the colored free-

holders to sell until some provisions are made to buy such as may be offered, lest they should be led to consider it all the work of a few excited individuals, and not the deliberate decision of peaceful citizens. They therefore recommend the subject to the attention of capitalists; having no doubt that, independent of every other consideration, the lots in question would be a very profitable investment of their funds, and that if a commencement were once made nearly all of the colored freeholders of the borough would sell as fast as funds could be raised to meet the purchasers. Your committee would further remark if everything was in readiness, considerable time would be required to effect the object; they would therefore recommend caution and deliberation in everything in relation to this important object.

"In conclusion your committee offer the following resolution:

"Resolved, That an association be formed for the purpose of raising funds for the purchase of the property of the blacks in this borough.

"Robert Spear

"H. Brimmer

"Jas. H. Miffin."

The report and resolution were adopted, and the following committee of five was appointed to form an association for the purpose of purchasing the property of the blacks in the borough: Joseph Cottrell, Dominick Eagle, John Cooper, Robert Spear and Jacob F. Markley.

Another exhibition of that mad spirit of anarchy and violence which was spreading over the community like a flood and overthrowing the laws and good order of the borough, was made in Columbia, on Tuesday night, September 2, 1834. At the dead hour of midnight — fit time for such deeds of darkness — a band of riotous persons assembled and attacked a house in Front street occupied by a black man, the porch and a part of the frame of which they tore down, the inmates leaving the building at the first alarm.

The mob then proceeded to the office of Stephen Smith, the wealthy coal and lumber dealer, which stood on Front street below the present roundhouse, broke open the windows and doors, rifled the desk, and scattered the papers along the pavement. After attempting to upset the building they marched off, having gained "glory enough for one night."

While this act of violence entailed a great loss to the colored merchant, who was able to bear it, he stood up manfully for his rights and bore the odium heaped upon him with the patience and humility so characteristic of his race.

Whether the committee appointed at the town meeting held on August 26, 1834, for the purpose of inducing the negroes to sell out and leave the town had prevailed upon Smith to do the same, cannot now be stated with any certainty.

Stephen Smith was one of the shrewdest business men of his day. Possibly he foresaw that his path in Columbia was destined to be a difficult one. Public opinion not only seemed to be against his race but against the wealthy lumber merchant in particular. The recent attack directed against him, when his office was ransacked, was still fresh in his mind and may have induced him to insert the following advertisement in the Columbia Spy:

"NOTICE.

"I offer my entire stock of lumber, either wholesale or retail, at a reduced price, as I am determined to close my business at Columbia. Any person desirous of entering into the lumber trade extensively can have the entire stock at a great bargain; or persons intending to open

yards along the line of the railroad, or builders, will find it to their advantage to call on me or my agent at my yard, as I am desirous of disposing of the above as soon as possible. I will also dispose of my real property in the borough, consisting of a number of houses and lots, some of them desirable situations for business.

"All persons having claims against me are requested to present them for payment, and all indebted are desired to call and discharge the same at my office in Columbia, or in Lancaster, as I intend being there every Saturday for that purpose.

"Stephen Smith"

On October 2, 1834, another riot occurred in Columbia, Penna. The Spy had this to say concerning this fresh outburst of violence:

"Thursday night last was one of bustle and alarm to all classes of our citizens at one hour or another such as we have not lately experienced; the fury of disorderly men and the ravages of the destructive element of fire, conspired to make it a season of confusion and terror. About 12 o'clock a mob which had collected began their operations by stoning, forcing into, and destroying the interior and furniture of several houses inhabited by colored persons. Four dwellings were more or less broken and injured, and the goods were scattered about and destroyed; one of the inhabitants, a black man, was severely bruised, cut in the face and had one of his arms rendered powerless; and other violence was done to the persons and property of the class of people to whom he belonged.

"These riots continued about an hour, and amidst great noise and shouting, and the sound of missiles coming in contact with the buildings disturbed the rest of the citizens adjacent to the scene of action.

"The exciting cause of this exhibition of illegal tumult and devastation, was the reported recent marriage of a black man to a white woman, which re-kindled the smouldering ashes of former popular madness and afforded an opportunity to evil-disposed individuals to react past occurrences of disorder and destruction. They, however, did not stop when they had punished the object of their wrath, but spent the residue of it upon others who had committed no fresh acts which called for punishment."

After this unwarranted display of violence, the town seems to have settled down to its usual routine of peace and order. Stephen Smith was still carrying his advertisement in the Columbia Spy, in the early part of 1835, in which he notified the public that he was disposed to sell his stock and real estate and leave town. Whether he was unable to secure a purchaser, or whether the sentiment seemingly had changed in regard to the Negroes in the borough is not definitely known. Smith continued to give to his lumber business the attention it demanded. He again invested more of his capital in real estate. Whenever a property was offered for sale, Smith was sure to be present, as in former years, obviously unmindful of the recent attack directed against him; and he was always one of the foremost and liveliest bidders. He again incurred the ill will of the white people, who became so envious of his success that they adopted drastic measures to get him to leave the town. One day he received the following notice through the post office in Columbia:

"S. Smith:—You have again assembled yourself amongst the white people to bid up property, as you have been in the habit of doing for a number of years back. You must know that your presence is not agreeable, and the less you appear in the assembly of the whites the better, it will be for your black hide, as there are a great many in this place

that would think your absence from it a benefit, as you are considered an injury to the real value of property in Columbia. You had better take the hint and save,.....

"February 27, 1835.

"MANY."

Smith gave little heed to this notice, but called the attention of James, William and John L. Wright to its contents. This seems to have greatly angered these men, who were Smith's friends, and they caused the notice that had been sent to Smith to be printed in the Columbia Spy. There appeared with it an offer of one hundred dollars reward for the apprehension of the authors.

This action on the part of the Wrights, in this publicity espousing the cause of the Negro lumber dealer, called forth no end of acrimonious comment and interrogation as to the wisdom of their course. In order to acquaint the public with their reasons for standing up for the rights of a fellow being, the Wrights inserted a notice in the Columbia Spy which read as follows:

"Enquiry being made why we advocate the cause of S. Smith by offering a reward for the detection of the author of a letter received by him with the vengeance of 'Many,' we state that it is not his cause but we consider ourselves injured by threats made to prevent persons from attending and bidding on property advertised by the subscribers, at public auction, to take place on the day following the receipt of said letter.

"William Wright

"John L. Wright

"James Wright."

Whether this action on the part of the Wrights had the effect of discouraging the public from continuing its persecutions of the lumber merchant, is not definitely known. One thing is certain, for a brief time after the receipt of the anonymous letter, Stephen Smith was not harrassed by the public, and this led him to believe that the tide had turned in his favor. He, therefore, decided to remain in Columbia and continue the lumber business. He made this clear to the public by inserting the following in the Spy:

"NOTICE.

"The subscriber, desirous to avoid being associated with those heart-rending scenes and unrighteous persecutions, that was directed against the colored population of this borough in the month of August last, was induced on the 19th day of the following month, (September) to publish in the "Columbia Spy," and "Lancaster Journal," the following advertisement viz: I offer my entire stock of lumber either wholesale or retail, at a reduced price, as I am determined to close my business in Columbia.....Any person desirous of entering into the lumber trade extensively, can have the entire stock at a bargain; or persons intending to open yards along the line of railroad, or builders, will find it to their advantage, to call on me or my agent at my yard, as I am desirous of disposing of the above as soon as possible.

"Now upwards of six months have elapsed, and I have not been favored with an opportunity of completing my original design. I do, therefore, under the guidance of a benign Providence, and with renewed confidence in the integrity and virtue of my fellow-citizens, make known to my patrons, and the public generally, not only in the county of Lancaster, but Philadelphia, Baltimore, and elsewhere, that I shall

continue to prosecute my business with usual vigor, and will be ready on every occasion, to execute all orders in my line with promptness and dispatch.

“Stephen Smith.

“P. S.—I do most cheerfully return my hearty thanks to my customers for the very liberal patronage I have always received, but more specially for their favors during that eventful period of excitement. For never before has there been a time when I could place such a just estimation on the value of friends. I, therefore, pledge myself in future to accommodate them on the most liberal terms.

“S. S.

“Columbia, April 11, 1835”.

Smith remained in Columbia and weathered the storm, but his life in the community was anything but pleasant. About 1838, he was ordained to preach as a clergyman of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1842, the Rev. Stephen Smith, having acquired a liberal competence and tiring of the persecutions that were heaped upon him, moved to Philadelphia. While there was no particular cause against him, his prudence impelled the change of residence. Prosperity followed him in his new home. He was then, and his memory is still, cherished among the colored people as the foremost man of his race in Columbia.

In Philadelphia he entered largely into real estate and stock speculations. He lost quite heavily by the failure of the United States bank, but his shrewdness and business talent enabled him to overcome all difficulties and to reimburse himself in a short time for his losses. He continued to retain his lumber business in Columbia with William Whipper, a colored resident of the borough and a relative of Smith, as an active partner. Whipper was a man of great force of character and possessed talent and unusual business qualifications.

Stephen Smith in Philadelphia, and William Whipper in Columbia, whose business had grown to be quite extensive, were valuable members of their respective communities. Both, by the judicious investment of their capital, had kept in constant employment a large number of persons. They purchased many rafts at a time and much coal. It was not only the Negro laborer in “drawing boards” and the coal hauler and heaver that were benefited by the capital of Smith and Whipper, but also the original owners of the lumber and coal, as well as the large number of boatmen and raftsmen in bringing the commodities to market.

Some idea of the extent to which the business of Smith and Whipper had grown may be gleaned from the following: In 1849 they had on hand several thousand bushels of coal, 2,250,000 feet of lumber, and twenty-two of the finest merchantmen cars running on the railroad from Columbia to Philadelphia and Baltimore. The firm owned nine thousand dollars worth of stock in the Columbia Bridge company and eighteen thousand dollars worth of stock in the Columbia bank. Stephen Smith was the reputed owner of fifty-two good brick houses of various dimensions in Philadelphia, besides a large number of houses and lots in Columbia, and a few in Lancaster. The paper of the firm of Smith and Whipper was good for any amount wherever they were known. The principal active business attended by Smith, in person, was that of buying good negotiable paper and speculating in real estate. The business of the firm in Columbia was attended to by William Whipper.

Although Stephen Smith was an ordained minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, he did not serve as pastor of any congregation. He was a member of the Bethel African Methodist church, called the mother church on account of it being the oldest of that denomination in Philadelphia. He preached in all the churches of his communion in the city. In 1857 he built the Zion Mission, at Seventh and Lombard streets, Philadelphia. It was largely through his efforts that a church for the people of his race was built in Cape May, N. J., where he spent his summers. He saved the Olive cemetery in Philadelphia as a place of burial for Negroes when it was under the sheriff's hammer.

He was instrumental in founding the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored Persons, now located at Forty-fourth street and Girard avenue, Philadelphia. In 1864 a house was purchased at 340 South Front street, but these quarters were soon found to be wholly inadequate for the large number that sought admission. At the sixth annual celebration of the institution, he presented the Home with a lot of ground in West Philadelphia, as a site for a more commodious building. At that time the lot was estimated to be worth ten thousand dollars; it has since grown to be immensely valuable. He also contributed \$28,000 in ground rents, which were used in the construction of the present structure known as Smith Building.

The Olive cemetery, adjoining the Home and which was purchased by him, has only recently been sold, the proceeds of which, it is reported, are to be applied towards the maintenance of the Home.

In politics Stephen Smith was an ardent Republican, taking an active part in the conventions of his party. He was also actively identified with every organization that had for its purpose the improvement and elevation of his own race. He was a good citizen, respected and esteemed by both whites and blacks. While he resided in Columbia he was one of the agents of the Underground Railroad and rendered much valuable service. He was opposed to the scheme of the colonization of Liberia by manumitted slaves and free persons of color from the United States, and presided at a meeting, held in Columbia on August 5, 1831, which denounced the scheme in bitter terms. He was a staunch, advocate of William Lloyd Garrison and others interested in the Abolition movement.

On November 14, 1873, Stephen Smith died at his residence in Philadelphia, on Lombard street above Ninth. The closing years of his life were attended with much suffering, and during the last six months his mind was deranged. He had no children.

Smith was a remarkable man in many respects, and was at the time of his death the wealthiest Negro in the United States. His estate was valued at more than two hundred thousand dollars. He bequeathed five thousand dollars to the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored Persons, of which institution he had been a vice-president and liberal benefactor for many years.

He was one of the few Negroes in the North who rose from servitude to wealth and affluence. And, in passing, it may be stated that this was attained in spite of a serious handicap. When a boy, he was hit in the eye with a snow ball which injured the sight of that organ.

His remains were interred in the Olive cemetery, adjoining the Home for Aged and Infirm Colored Persons. On a tombstone erected to his memory is inscribed:

Rev. Stephen Smith.
Died Nov. 14, 1873,
aged 76 years 9 months.

If he was five years and three months old on July 10, 1801, the date when he was indentured to General Boude, he must have been born in April 1796. This would make his age at the time of his death 77 years and seven months.

By his side rests the body of his wife, on whose stone is carved:
Harriet Smith.
Dec. 25, 1797.
Aug. 17, 1880.

Nearby repose the ashes of his mother. The elements have so defaced the inscription on her tombstone that it cannot be deciphered. So far as could be learned, her name was Nancy Smith and she died in 1853 aged 94 years.

An incident in this woman's life is worth recording:

The first reported case of the attempted kidnapping of a slave in Columbia was at the home of General Boude, a distinguished Revolutionary soldier. It will be recalled that he had purchased Stephen Smith, when he was but five years of age, from a family by the name of Cochran, who resided near Harrisburg. General Boude brought him to Columbia, where he was but a short time before his mother ran away from the Cochran home and came to General Boude's in Columbia. Soon afterward, a lady, on horseback arrived in Columbia and dismounted in front of General Boude's residence on Front street. She at once went through General Boude's dwelling until she reached the kitchen, and seeing Mrs. Smith seized hold of her and attempted to drag her to the street and tie her with a rope to the horse. The ladies, however, of General Boude's household made such a protest that the General, who was engaged in his lumber yard some distance away, heard the outcries and came to the rescue of the colored woman. Mrs. Cochran was compelled to leave for home without her slave. Fearing that Mr. Cochran would attempt to kidnap Mrs. Smith, General Boude went to Harrisburg and purchased her from her master.

The remains of William Whipper, a partner of Stephen Smith, are also interred in Olive cemetery. On his tomb is inscribed:

William Whipper
b. Feb. 22, 1804.
d. March 9, 1876.

After the dissolution of the partnership of Smith and Whipper, lumber merchants of Columbia, Whipper moved to Philadelphia where he became cashier in the Freedman's bank.

While he resided in Columbia he was an active agent of the Underground Railroad, and assisted hundreds of slaves by passing them to a land of freedom.

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